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SPORTS

THE BATTALION

# Ready for the Super Bowl

## NFL officials visit Houston to see city's preparations

By Pam Easton  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — Dust covers the floor, plaster work is yet to be finished on some of the walls and plastic remains over light fixtures at Houston's George R. Brown Convention Center where thousands of football fans will gather in four months for the NFL Experience, a festival that accompanies the Super Bowl.

Tiles were being laid Monday and carpeting already in place was protectively covered as NFL Senior Vice President for Special Events, Jim Steeg, pointed toward the newly built corner office he'll be using as the Feb. 1 Super Bowl nears.

"At least you don't have one of those countdown clocks at the airport. It scares the heck out of you," Steeg told Houston Mayor Lee Brown, who joined him for a tour of the city's expanded convention center, which by the end of the year will showcase three additional exhibit halls, six

new show offices, four new conference rooms and an additional 64 meeting rooms.

The center also will include a new double-decker pedestrian bridge leading to the soon-to-open 1,200 room Hilton Americas-Houston hotel.

"You've got a facility here that is going to be done. You've got a hotel that is going to be done in December and you've got a can-do attitude of the people. So that solves all the problems," Steeg said, saying he was encouraged by the construction progress. "Once you get the walls up, it is amazing how quick they can do the inside stuff to make it all work."

Steeg was among about 80 NFL officials in Houston Monday to work out logistics for the Feb. 1 game at Reliant Stadium.

"Houston is going to put on a good show. You'll want to come back again," Brown confidently told Steeg.

Steeg said while Houston faces competition, it could be back in the running to host another Super Bowl if the upcoming game goes off without a hitch.

"There are probably a couple billion dollars of infrastructure that have been put in this community in the last three years," Steeg said. "We are probably going to put some tent companies out of business. We normally do about \$1 million to \$1.5 million in tent business every year and we are not going to do any this year. I think we are in really good shape."

Houston combines the positive features of previous Super Bowl cities San Diego and

Atlanta, Steeg said.

"San Diego we loved because our headquarters hotel was next to the convention center," he said. "Atlanta was great because we had the stadium, which was right next to the convention center to do all the things there. So you've got the best of both worlds."

Beyond the Super Bowl, Brown said the convention center expansion, which extends the building the size of a football field on each end, will allow the city to expand its convention business.

"In the past about 450 conventions passed us up because we did not have the hotel space," the mayor said.

The \$165 million convention center expansion will increase its size from 1.15 million to 1.85 million square feet. The city also plans to open a 7.5-mile rail line between Reliant Stadium and the convention center in January, spruce up the city with additional trees and expects a number of new bars and restaurants to open in downtown.

"Houston is going to put on a good show. You'll want to come back again."

— Lee Brown  
Houston mayor

## Texas talking to media again

By Jim Vertuno  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — Texas is talking to the media again — for now.

As promised, the No. 14 Longhorns ended their media boycott after their 48-7 win over Rice and were all smiles Monday in talking about this week's home game with Tulane.



BROWN

But more zipped lips could be in the near future. Quarterback Chance Mock said he'd refuse interviews again "if it helps us win," and Roy Williams, the senior wide receiver who led the boycott, said he'd prefer to shut down all the talking after Monday.

"I think Mondays are great," Williams said. "We can have media day all day Monday."

The rest of the week, he said, "is our work time."

Texas (2-1) typically allows player interviews Monday through Wednesday with the coaching staff available most of the week. Last week's media boycott after a 38-28 home loss to Arkansas was the first in recent memory.

Coach Mack Brown, who encourages his team to talk to the media, said he didn't have anything to do with last week's boycott. He said he liked the message behind the silence.

"Their reason was right. It wasn't a boycott of the media as much as it was 'We're tired of talking about Arkansas and we're tired of negatives,'" Williams said.

Williams called for the boycott in a practice field huddle last Tuesday after seeing some things he didn't like following the Arkansas loss.

"I just didn't think a lot of people understood the difference between winning and losing," Williams said. "When we lose you're not supposed to be laughing, joking and having a good time. I saw some of that and we had to get everything straightened out. They were just young and didn't understand. Me being the senior leader helped them understand."

Williams gave up a chance to turn pro after last season to return for one last chance at winning Big 12 and national titles.

"We've got to win, man. We're in the same boat as the Miamis, the Tennessees, Florida States and Oklahoma — top notch," Williams said.

"I've lost eight ball games," he said. "I told them I don't want to lose no more. I think they understand."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

### Man charged with soliciting murder in Bryant case

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Prosecutors charged a Swiss bodybuilder Monday with solicitation of murder for allegedly offering to kill the woman who accused Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant of rape.

Patrick Graber, 31, also was charged with solicitation to dissuade a witness, the district attorney's office said. Prosecutors recommended bail be set at \$1 million.

In an appearance in Superior Court, Graber agreed to a one-week delay of his arraignment. No plea was entered and he remained in custody.

If convicted of the two felonies, he faces up to nine years and eight months in prison, the district attorney's office said.

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